

3-26-08 6)

Please replace the subtitle at page <sup>12</sup> 11, line 1, and replace it with the following text:  
**CLAIMS** What is claimed is:

- 7) Please insert the following subtitle and text to new page 15, line 1:

**Abstract of the Disclosure**

A method and an apparatus for welding with a laser beam. A shielding gas mixture of nitrogen and helium is used and the proportions of the component gases are modified depending on the laser beam's power or power density. Plasma formation in the shield gas is minimized by increasing the proportion of helium as the laser beam's power or power density increases.